

BS3335– Policy Analysis Decision Making

Module Number: BS3335

Module Title: Policy Analysis Decision Making

Number of Aston Credits: 20

Total Number of ECTS Credits: 10
(European Credit Transfer)

Staff Member Responsible for the Module:

Term 1: **Dr E. Tapinos**
Economics & Strategy Group
South Wing, Room 908, Extension 3356
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To arrange an appointment please use the above email address

Term 2: **TBC**

Other Staff Contributing to the Module:

External guest speakers will be announced during the term

Pre-Requisite(s) for the Module: None

Module Learning Outcomes:

On successful completion of this module students will be able to:

- Understand and apply key concepts and terminology in strategy and decision-making
- Critically evaluate the theoretical bases of the strategy and decision-making process and examine the relevance of these theories to actual practice
- Manage themselves and their own learning in both an individual and group context
- Develop and enhance research and analysis skills on both structured and real-world case material
- Integrate theoretical analysis with real-world practice to produce informed views on current management issues

Module Content:

The module can be broadly divided into three inter-related sections with the following aims and objectives. Firstly, to provide an appreciation of the dynamic nature of the inner and outer contexts in which strategy occurs.

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Secondly, to provide an understanding of the issues involved in putting strategy into practice. Thirdly, to examine the techniques and concepts actually used by senior executives in putting a firm's strategy into practice, particularly in terms of matching the firm's capabilities to anticipated developments within its operational context.

Topic 1: What is Strategy? Does Matter? An introduction to Strategic Management

Topic 2: Relationships between the firm and the environment

Topic 3: Firm resources, competences and capabilities as sources of competitive advantage

Topic 4: Business Level Strategies

Topic 5: Corporate Level Strategies

Topic 6: Organisational purpose – Visioning

Topic 7: International Strategies

Topic 8: Network Level Strategies

Topic 9: Scenario Planning 1: Assessment of Uncertainty within the strategy development process

Topic 10: Scenario Planning 2: Building scenarios

Topic 11: Strategy Development Process: from the analysis to strategic options selection

Conceptualising the issues involved in putting strategy into practice

Topic 12: Strategy in regulated environments

Topic 13: Organising

Topic 14: Resourcing

Topic 15: Managing strategic change

Topic 16: Culture and strategy

Topic 17: IBML guest speaker (date TBC)

Topic 18: Strategy makers & doers

Topic 19: Strategising methodologies and tools

Topic 20: Strategy in the real world: SMEs

Topic 21: Recent developments: Strategy-as-practice

Topic 22: Revision session

International Dimensions:

The module includes international material, for example, on globalisation and strategic alliances, uses international case studies and considers different cultural perspectives and approaches to corporate strategy. Additionally, students undertake a major piece of assessed coursework analysing a real organisation. In addition, there will be one international guest speaker, who will do a presentation in French/German depending on the student's affiliation.

Corporate Connections:

Over the course of module, senior managers from a range of sectors will be invited to discuss their organisation's approach to the strategy-making process, as well as reflecting upon their own abilities. In the past, senior managers and consultants from HSBC, NEC, Aston Science Park, Accenture Consulting, Hutchison 3G, and Cap Gemini, National Grid, Ernst and Young have shared their knowledge and experiences with students.

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Links to Research

Dr Tapinos' research is engaged with the Strategic Development Process; Strategy tools; Strategic foresight and Perceived Environmental Uncertainty (-Scenario Planning); Performance Measurement/Management (-Balanced Scorecard). Dr Tapinos is also researching the use of e-learning technologies on the teaching of strategic management. His research articles have been published in Journal of the Operational Research Society; Journal of Production Planning & Control; International Journal Production and Performance Measurement.

Learning and Teaching Rationale and Methods:

- a) Method of Learning and Teaching - The format of the module is two hour lecture sessions in which the first hour is devoted to a lecture presentation; followed by more interactive discussion, case material and student presentations in syndicate groups.

Readings from recommended texts and from current journals is required preparation for formal class sessions. The set text presents a range of relevant case material and a selection of readings that present diverse and opposing viewpoints, encouraging students to take a broad perspective on the lecture topics. This format enables students to develop a basis of core concepts and terminology, as well as developing analytic skills through application to case material. As 40% of the assessable work features group assignments on both theoretical investigations and case study topics, students will also gain experience teamwork, and analysis of structured and real-world case material.

For additional real life examples and case studies Term 1 is complement with <http://strat-man.blogspot.com>

- b) Duration

Lectures and case studies/tutorials	40 hours
Examination:	2 hours
Preparation of weekly projects (Assessment 1)	15 hours
Preparation of literature review (Assessment 2):	15 hours
Preparation of company analysis (Assessment 3)	44 hours
Preparation of Guest lecturer assessment (Assignment 4)	8 hours
Exam revision:	10 hours
Reading:	66 hours

Total:	200 hours

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Assessment and Feedback Rationale and Methods:

This module combines a multi-assessment approach which seeks to help the students develop different skills. The assessments are both group and individually based.

Examination (50%)

The two-hour examination will be closed book. It will examine the student's knowledge of core terms and concepts and the ability to apply these concepts in real life examples and cases.

Assessment 1 (15%)

Each group will be given a case study organisation for which they would have to prepare brief and informal reports which would require the application of theory taught. The reports will be used in the discussion sessions, too.

Assessment 2 (10%)

Each group will be given an emergent topic from the strategic management literature and will be required to conduct a thorough literature review and present a critical discussion of this topic. This assignment will be marked as a collective effort.

Assessment 3 (5%)

Each student will be required to do an individual assignment set by the international guest lecturer.

Assessment 4 (20%)

Each group will be given a case study organisation and will have to prepare a report on their company (5000 words) that shows the extent to which that company's strategy and portfolio of activities is affected by regulation. This assignment will be marked as a collective effort.

Group Work

There are two primary reasons for group work. First, it is an essential competence for final year undergraduate students who are shortly to go into the workplace. It is one of the Module Learning Outcomes. Secondly, the assignments are designed to enable students to apply theoretical concepts to real world business cases and issues, as per the Module Learning Outcomes. Group work both provides a critical mass of students to undertake the work necessary to complete such research-intensive assignments and also more closely reflects a 'real-world' strategic issue-solving situation, such as students may experience in business.

Groups will consist of 5 to 6 students randomly assigned. Group work will be assessed on the basis of an equal mark for each member of the group. All students will be required to complete a form validating their level of contribution to the overall assignment and presentation. The form used is attached and is also available on blackboard. The lecturer is available to help groups experiencing problems with working in teams. However, development of these skills is considered an important component of the learning outcomes of the module.

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For coursework submission dates please refer to the glass cabinets on the 5th floor of the Main Building or to Blackboard. Failure to complete coursework on time will render a student liable to the late submission penalty applied in the Business School.

Feedback:

Feedback for the teaching material and the assessment is obtained formally and informally. Each lecture has some time allocated in the end for student questions. The students can approach the lecturers and tutors in their office hours for more specific questions. It is generally advised that students approach their tutors for questions regarding their assignment. There is a ***Frequently Asked Questions*** document on BlackBoard which covers key questions on the teaching material, the assignment, group work related issues, the exam and revision. Also, for quick feedback or or more in-depth discussions, there is the ***Discussion Forum**** on BlackBoard which is available for students to post their questions/threads. Feedback on the assignment will be provided in the tutorials. Electronic formal feedback will accompany the assignment evaluation indicating the strengths and the areas for improvement.

*Rules for the use of Discussion Forum:

- everyone is welcome to post or answer a thread, either eponymously or anonymously;
- posts on the Discussion Forum can concern any aspect of the module;
- posts which are already covered in the Module Outline and FAQ document will not be answered;
- posts should not be offensive;
- posts should not contain a part of the assignment;
- the Forum Administrators reserve the right to delete or moderate posts which do not comply with the Rules.

